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ABSTRACT

The University of Montevallo, Alabama, instituted a team interview process during the fall semester of 1998 as an additional criterion for determining eligibility to the Teacher Education Program. This study examines the perceptions of preservice teachers who underwent the team interview process. A group of 48 students were surveyed to determine: their understanding of the interview process; their level of comfort during the interview; and their level of satisfaction with the process. Students completed the survey immediately after the team interview. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the survey, which used a Likert-type scale and open-ended questions to determine students' agreement with six statements regarding: feeling properly notified about the interview process; feeling prepared for the interview process; feeling informed about how to get results from the interview by those on the interview team; feeling comfortable during the interview; feeling that questions asked assessed their readiness for further study in teacher education; and feeling that they passed the interview. The results indicated that the average candidate was in agreement with the survey's six statements. The survey is appended. (SM)

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Running head: WHO WILL TEACH

Who Will Teach Our Children?

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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November 19, 1999

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Abstract

The University of Montevallo instituted a team interview process the fall semester of 1998 as additional criteria for determining eligibility to the Teacher Education Program. This study examines the perceptions of preservice teachers who underwent the team interview process. Students were surveyed to determine: (a) their understanding of the interview process, (b) their level of comfort during the interview, and (c) their level of satisfaction with the process. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the student survey. Students completed the survey immediately after the team interview. A Likert-type scale and open-ended questions were used on the survey.

Who Will Teach Our Children?

The continued success of Teacher Education (TE) Programs depends on the successful selection of teacher candidates (Shechtman & Godfried, 1993). What are the attributes of a successful teacher? How can TE programs screen-in the types of teacher candidates that will display successful teaching attributes? How can TE programs nurture and measure the potential for these attributes in teacher candidates? What are the most successful procedures for selecting successful candidates? These are the questions facing institutions of higher education that train teachers.

Most, if not all, institutions use standardized tests and grade point averages (GPA). Many programs prefer this objective and quantitative data because these are legally defensible (Jacobowitz, 1994). Yet, high scores on standardized tests and high GPAs alone do not make a successful teacher candidate. Many of the attributes that support successful teaching such as communication skills, human interaction, and leadership skills are more subjective and qualitative.

Attributes such as written communication can be assessed formally and informally, but how do TE programs assess oral communication skills and human interaction? What qualitative data are available to assess the teacher candidate's potential as a leader. Gathering this information requires subjective judgement. Subject judgement can be questioned, especially if the judgement comes from only one person. Listed below is a compellation of the attributes of successful teacher candidates discussed in the professional literature.

Verbal Communication:

- Development of Thought
- Clarity of Thinking
- Organization of Thoughts
- Verbal Expression
- Fluency of Speech

Human Interaction:

- Warmth
- Establish and Maintain Rapport with Students
- Sensitivity
- Humanness
- Self Confidence
- Ability to Work Well with Others
- Motivating Students to Learn

Leadership:

- Initiative
- Enthusiasm
- A Sense of Responsibility
- Self-Assurance
- Energy
- Perseverance
- Professional Decision-making

(Bennett, 1991; Demetrulias & Chiodo, 1990; Shedhman & Godfried, 1993.)

To better assess these attributes, the TE Program at the University of Montevallo (UM) screens candidates before acceptance into the TE programs. One-on-one interviews with faculty were one of the primary screening devices used to evaluate potential candidates to the program. This subjective opinion was left to the student's academic advisor. This process presented the advisor with two choices, take a stand and deny a marginal student assess to the TE program or pass the student and hope for the best. Advisors unwilling to extend themselves to make this decision alone, tended to opt for the latter choice.

Much of what is done in TE programs is to screen out candidates based on an agreed upon criteria. Research supports the use of group interviews to select-in teacher candidates (Shechtman & Godfried, 1993). Group assessment is an effective technique for evaluating prospective candidates in assessment centers. Group assessment is commonly used to evaluate human interaction, leadership, and oral communication. Yet there is a lack of cumulative and descriptive information regarding the purpose and process of these interviews (Shechtman & Godfried, 1993). This study attempts to add to the professional literature data regarding the use of group interviews to screen teacher education candidates.

The entrance requirements to many TE programs include pre-admission interviews. Teacher educators are asking for more comprehensive procedures such as a group interview. Devising procedures for group interviews was a challenge taken on by UM's College of Education (COE). The UM initiated group interviews fall, 1998. The procedures for this interview are briefly described below.

Procedures

Teacher candidates make application for the interview in the Office of Teacher Education Services. In this office, screening for eligibility takes place. Data used for this initial screening are quantitative: GPAs and a grade of C or better in designated courses. All faculty and professional staff in the COE participate in the team interview process. Students are assigned to a faculty team based on areas of certification and faculty expertise. Faculty teams include at least one to two faculty members that are certified at the level that the candidates are seeking licensure. Teams for secondary students represent content and

pedagogy. At the UM, secondary students receive degrees in the content area; therefore, advisors in the content participate in the team interviews.

Interview procedures along with sample questions are distributed to all faculty/staff members prior to the scheduled interviews. Students receive the results of the interview in an individual conference with their academic advisors. It is the advisor's responsibility to discuss the results of the interview and make recommendations for remediation if the team noted severe deficits.

Evaluation

In an effort to evaluate the candidate's opinions of the interview process, the first cohort of TE candidates interviewed by a team were surveyed. Immediately following the team interview, each teacher candidate was given a survey by one of the three interviewers. The survey contained six Likert-type questions and three open-ended questions. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix. The teacher candidates were asked to complete the survey and return it to the office of Teacher Education Services immediately following the interview. To ensure honest feedback, teacher candidates were not asked to put their names on the survey. Of the 50 candidates that were interviewed, 48 students returned the survey.

The candidates read each of the six statements on the survey and responded with either 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (somewhat disagree), 4 (somewhat agree), 5 (agree), or 6 (strongly agree). All 48 candidates responded to all six of the statements except statement three, which was responded to by 47 of the candidates. The mean rating was computed for the six statements and is presented in the table on the following page:

Table 1

Mean Ratings on Each Statement

	Statement on Survey	Mean Rating
1.	I was properly notified about the interview process	4.54
2.	I felt prepared for the interview process.	4.81
3.	I was informed on how to get results from the interview by those on the interview team.	5.00
4.	I felt comfortable during the interview.	5.25
5.	The questions asked by the interview team assessed my readiness for further study in teacher education.	5.52
6.	I felt I passed the interview.	5.10

Their results indicate that the average candidate was in agreement with all six statements which shows an average positive response to the team interview process.

The frequency with which each rating was chosen was also tallied. Table 2 indicates the number of candidates that chose each of the ratings. This table is presented on the following page.

Table 2

Frequency of Response of Each Rating for the Statements

Statement on Survey		Ratings					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	I was properly notified about the interview process	5	2	5	5	12	19
2.	I felt prepared for the interview process.	1	1	1	11	23	11
3.	I was informed on how to get results from the interview by those on the interview team.	4	4	0	1	9	29
4.	I felt comfortable during the interview.	1	0	0	8	15	24
5.	The questions asked by the interview team assessed my readiness for further study in teacher education.	1	0	0	2	14	31
6.	I felt I passed the interview.	0	0	1	9	22	16

As stated, one student did not answer question three. This indicates the 75% of the candidates were in agreement (from somewhat to strongly) that they were properly notified about the interview process. Further, 93.75% were in agreement that they were prepared for the interview. A high majority of the candidates (81.25%) were in agreement that they were informed on how to receive their results from the interview. All of the candidates but one (97.92%) were in agreement that they felt comfortable, that the questions they were asked

furthered their readiness for teacher education, and that they felt they passed the interview.

The candidates were also asked to respond to three open-ended questions. The first question asked to the candidate was, "What is the best aspect of the interview process?" Forty-four of the candidates responded to this question with a majority (n=25) of the candidates commenting that the best aspect was being made to feel comfortable. Six of the candidates felt the best aspect was that it stimulated their feelings about being a teacher. Four of the candidates commented on that the quality of the questions asked. Three of the candidates enjoyed meeting the interview team members. Two candidates stated that the interview gave them a sense of professionalism. One candidate found that the best aspect was the interview helped develop a better understanding of how professors feel about the process of education. One candidate enjoyed having others observe his or her personality and enthusiasm. One candidate felt that it was a valid method to assess speaking abilities. And, one candidate simply stated, "I thought it was a great experience."

The candidates were also asked, "What suggestions do you have for improving the interview process?" Thirty-three of the candidates responded to this question. The most popular response came from 16 of the candidates. They indicated that they had no suggestions with most of them further commenting that the interview was conducted well. Nine candidates suggested that the notification of the interview date come earlier. This suggestion has been taken with interview dates being posted months in advance. Three candidates made suggestions concerning the actual questions used with one proposing more subject area questions, one recommending more of a variety of questions, and

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one requesting a copy of the questions before the interview. Two candidates suggested that practice sessions be enacted. To answer to this suggestion, students who are considering the TE program at UM are required to take a course which addresses the team interview and what type of questions to expect in the interview. One candidate suggested giving more help with the paperwork involved with applying to the TE Program. This is also addressed in the aforementioned course that is required of all students who are contemplating the TE Program. Lastly, one student suggested not using three instructors as interviewers and one suggested more air conditioning.

Candidates were also invited to make any additional comments. Sixteen of the candidates made statements with six of them commenting on the friendly, comfortable atmosphere. Three commented that they enjoyed the experience, and three felt that good questions were asked. Two candidates made reference to having better notification and two stated that the interview process went well. One candidate suggested a mock interview.

Conclusions

The University of Montevallo is in the process of refining the interview procedures. Several positive results were revealed. Teacher candidates can no longer consider the interview a formality. Candidates in the past were known to describe the interview as, " no big thing, everybody passes it." This was most likely due to the fact that before the team interview process was initiated, no candidates failed the interview. However, in the first cohort that was surveyed, four of the candidates failed the team interview. Presently, UM has conducted 165 team interviews and of these, 17 have failed. The candidates who fail are counseled by their academic advisors. The candidates are then allowed to

reattempt the team interview. Candidates value their acceptance into the program and appear to have internalized the fact that they are seeking acceptance into a professional program.

On national and state levels, colleges of education are pressured to produce more capable novices to the profession. A capable novice is not just defined by scholarship. To work and grow as a capable professional, novices will need an abundance of other positive attributes as defined earlier in this paper. Group interviews support the assessment of these attributes.

References

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Appendix

TEACHER EDUCATION SERVICES
STATION 6352
INTERVIEW SURVEY – PLEASE RETURN TO WILLS 207

The following survey is designed to assess the team interview process. Please reflect on the following questions and answer them honestly to the best of your ability. Do not put your name on this survey. Please answer every question, but only complete this survey once. Thank you for your time!

For questions 1-6 please indicate your agreement with the statements by circling the number that corresponds with how you most feel. The succeeding numbers equal the following:
1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3= somewhat disagree
4= somewhat agree
5= agree
6= strongly agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I was properly notified about the interview process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I felt prepared for the interview process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I was informed on how to get the results from the interview by those on the interview team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I felt comfortable during the interview.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The questions asked by the interview team assessed my readiness for further study in teacher education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I feel I passed the interview.	1	2	3	4	5	6

For numbers 7-9, please answer the following:

7. What is the best aspect of the interview process?

See #8 and #9 on Back -->

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8. What suggestions do you have for improving the interview process?

_____

_____

_____

9. Additional Comments:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and assistance. Please return surveys to the office of TEP (Wills 207).
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